

Enlightening Globalization: An Opportunity for Continuing Education

Fernando Reimers

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The modern university, chartered in Berlin, was crafted to enlighten the public and to help advance social progress through science and reason. Its creator, Wilhelm Von Humboldt, Minister of Education of the Prussian education system, considered the first universal system of public education, was one of the visionary leaders of the early nineteenth century who acted on the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, espousing a more humane social contract built on the premises of justice, equality, and freedom for all, and proposing an important role for educational institutions in building that order. Wilhelm's brother, Alexander, in exploring and studying much of the new world, demonstrated a form of cosmopolitanism and global citizenship that characterized truly exceptional individuals in his time. Two centuries later, those leading our cathedrals of knowledge could take inspiration from these two figures of the Enlightenment in leveraging the resources of the university to educate the public about globalization, and thus democratize cosmopolitanism.

Globalization presents a new social context for educational institutions from elementary schools to universities. In response to this new context, schools and universities are slowly changing their ways. These changes range from altering the curriculum so that students understand the process of globalization itself, or develop competencies attuned with the demands of globalization (such as learning foreign languages), to restructuring educational activities and programs capitalizing on some of the integral

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components of globalization, such as the greater ease of travel, rapid dissemination of information, and increasing integration of technology into the education enterprise (e.g., increasing the percentage of foreign students and faculty, encouraging study and work abroad for students, and supporting faculty research abroad). Whether these changes are adequate or sufficient is the subject of much debate among educators and other constituents of the education enterprise, including parents, civic leaders, politicians, and business leaders.

In the higher education community this debate includes questions of means as well as of purpose. This re-examination of the social purpose of the university in response to globalization is an opportunity to restore continuing education and extension as a central aspect of the mission of the modern university, especially as the university extends its resources and work to serve the broader community—those not typically engaged as students, faculty, and staff—and to connect with teachers and students at those levels where the opportunity to be educated is universal (i.e., at the K-12 level).

THE URGENCY TO DEVELOP GLOBAL COMPETENCY

There are three reasons at least to make the development of global skills an important focus of the curriculum in the twenty-first century:

- Globalization requires that people understand the process and how it influences their lives.
- Globalization places an economic premium in global skills
- Globalization redefines citizenship. The boundaries between domestic and foreign policy issues are increasingly fluid.

These reasons call for a shift in our understanding of who should develop global competency and for a shift in how we think about the depth of competency, from a superficial and narrow focus to a deep and broad-based undertaking. To be globally competent, and more importantly, to be a global leader in this century, it is not enough to have taken a course in introductory French, studied the major European capitals, or traveled abroad to study in English in an outpost of an American educational institution in Florence, Paris, or Rome.

The fact is that telecommunications technologies, travel, commerce, and migration create a context where a large growing group of the world's population interacts with people, ideas, values, and expectations from different geographies. The density of these experiences supports an awareness

that we live in a global context, one that is neither local nor national. The result is that the concept of community is no longer defined or limited by geographic boundaries; there are transnational and supranational communities. An aspect of the more recent forms of globalization is that those exchanges are not just across different geographies or cultures but also across civilizational streams. We are living in the space of flows (Castells). Cultural exchanges are no longer principally within one's immediate zone of cultural proximity—from the US to Britain, or from the US to Europe—but across cultural zones, north and south, east and west.

Economic production, trade, and finance are particularly important dimensions of globalization, but not the only dimension. The space of flows is a space of financial, cultural, demographic, and epidemiological flows; they all have a significant impact on the lives of people everywhere. The emergence and the disappearance of opportunity in many places is a result of the interactions of these various flows. There is also a flow of violence that stems from de-territorialized political conflicts. Political conflicts and violence have clear global ramifications, and many are not permanently situated in particular geographies but migrate in the space of flows, often in neighboring states, but also across distant geographies. These flows have accelerated in the last decade.

Technological developments continue to accelerate communication and integration. This is extending the flows from north to south, from the countries that first developed the telecommunication infrastructure and that dominated trade and financing, to a space of flows that connects the south. Beijing University's department of political science, for example, now offers high-level professional development to senior government officials in countries in Africa and Asia, which are important trading partners of China, much in the way that universities in the United States offered similar training to government officials in developing countries.

Another recent change is the persistence and emergence of violence and of new forms of deterritorialized political violence. This undermines global stability, and makes certain regions of the world particularly volatile. Because of globalization, instability in one area has the potential to have multiplier effects in many geographies.

The Center for Systemic Peace estimates that 3,565,000 people have died in the 98 conflicts that have taken place since 1998 (Marshall). Less than a third of these conflicts lasted less than a year; almost half lasted three years or more; one in four, five years or more; and 11 have lasted

over a decade. The UN estimates that more than two million children have been killed in armed conflicts, another six million rendered permanently disabled, and more than 250,000 children continue to be exploited as child soldiers (Coomaraswamy). The survivors of conflict are a multiple of those who die in conflict. The United Nations High Commissioner for refugees estimates the number of refugees at 33 million. These conflicts take place disproportionately in the poorest nations, and affect the poorest members of those societies.

Given these trends resulting from globalization, ordinary citizens need to understand how the economy and politics of Brazil, China, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, and Russia are interrelated and how they relate to the US economy. Increasingly, citizens need to speak and understand foreign languages.

The nation's economic and political security calls for greater global competency. There are growing opportunities for those with such competency in business, foreign service, the intelligence community, and the military. These opportunities will increase the gap between those who have those competencies and those who do not. Because at present most Americans do not have these competencies, university continuing education has a unique opening to close that gap and to help prepare K-12 teachers to make a difference with the next generation of students. The global competency challenge is well summarized in the following statement:

When the RAND Corporation surveyed respondents from 16 global corporations, many were highly critical of US universities' ability to produce graduates with international skills. One marketing manager said that, compared to their counterparts from universities in other parts of the world, US students are "strong technically" but "shortchanged" in cross-cultural experience and "linguistically deprived." Another corporate human resource manager explained: "Universities don't think globally—it's not ingrained in their philosophy and curriculum to create the global worker." One corporate respondent went even further: "If I wanted to recruit people who are both technically skilled and culturally aware, I wouldn't even waste time looking for them on US college campuses" (Committee for Economic Development).

We live in a rapidly shifting era in which economic opportunities and challenges abound. Those who are educated in the new rules of the game stand to do well, but those who are not will face real and growing problems. Worldwide developments affecting job expectations, health, physical security, public policy, communications, investment opportunities, immigration, and community relations, are changing the context of our lives, sometimes in very immediate ways. Today all of us must understand the changes to which we must respond individually and collectively. The process of shaping this understanding and knowledge must begin early, as it will help youth remain engaged with an education that they see as relevant to help them make meaning of the world in which they live. It will also allow them to develop deeper levels of proficiency.

Students of any age are engaged when learning is important to them and when they see its relevance to their lives. A focus on issues that are relevant to students and to their friends, families, and communities is key. Some of the aspects of globalization that should be understood by most citizens include trade, energy interdependence, international institutions, law and global governance, human rights, global poverty and inequality, global peace, conflict and security, environmental degradation and challenges, and population growth and imbalances.

Cultural, economic, and political elites in this country have long understood the importance of global competence and the necessity of developing international competence. Some credit the success of the early life of the American experiment to the well-developed diplomatic skills of Benjamin Franklin, who engaged the financial support of the French and negotiated treaties with British diplomats. For centuries, privileged Americans have had the opportunity to deepen their understanding of language, history, geography, and other cultures through travel. John Dewey, the great American educator, drew some of his most insightful ideas about education and society from travel abroad and from studying foreign cultures. Henry Longfellow, who spoke several languages, made his home a hub of international activity, hosting many foreign visitors to Harvard University and to Boston. Mary Peabody Mann, the wife of Horace Mann, was a cosmopolitan who spoke several languages, traveled widely, and played an important role facilitating educational and scientific exchanges between Boston and countries as far away as Argentina.

What is changing as a result of the growing recognition that global competency matters is that these skills are necessary for the majority of the population, not just for a few.

At the end of World War II, political elites agreed on the importance of publicly funding programs in universities to enhance the development of a cadre of experts in foreign languages and area studies that would serve the perceived needs of national security, and more recently, of business competitive advantage. It was thus that Congress established a range of programs such as Fulbright-Hays in 1946 (revised and expanded in 1961) and in 1980, the Title VI act of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which supported the development of area studies centers in universities. In 2005 the Fulbright Program received \$145 million and Title VI received \$93 million. The Foreign Language Assistance Program, which funds grants to establish foreign language study in elementary schools, received \$18 million in 2005.

Underlying these private efforts and publicly funded programs was the view that global competency was necessary for relatively small groups of people who would develop deep expertise in foreign languages, cross-cultural competency, and knowledge of other countries and regions. Support for these programs has continued, and the federal government funds them at a level of approximately \$100 million per year. In the meantime, mass education worked hard to assimilate immigrants and to teach primarily English, at times explicitly attempting to reduce expressions of cultural diversity.

Developments over the last 50 years have broadened the need for international expertise in at least two ways: fields demanding international expertise, such as in business, have expanded to include a much larger range of occupations than was the case five decades ago, including areas such as law, public health and education; and the population served has become more culturally diverse, reflecting immigration flows.

The need for international competence has extended to other areas of life beyond work. As expressed in the recent statement of the Committee for Economic Development:

Full participation in this new global economy will require not just competency in reading, mathematics and science, but also proficiency in foreign languages and deeper knowledge of other countries and cultures. Our efforts in education reform must be harmonized with global realities if we are to confront successfully a multitude of new and growing challenges to America's security and prosperity.

Because the boundaries between international and domestic problems have become increasingly porous, the very demands of government and citizenship now require knowledge of international topics. Elected representatives and voters will be able to make informed decisions about issues such as trade, epidemics, environmental conservation, energy use, immigration, and global stability only if they have the education to understand the global determinants and consequences of those issues and their decisions. For example, US citizens might be able to reflect more critically on American democracy if they realized that laws in certain southern states limit the voting rights of people who have been in prison, and the only other country to impose such limits is Armenia. Similarly, Americans may be more inclined to accept the legitimacy of an unelected world trade tribunal in Geneva if they realize it benefits the US as much as it benefits other countries: a few years ago several Southeast Asian nations challenged the American law that banned the import of shrimp caught with nets that killed endangered species as protectionist; likewise, the American entertainment industry challenged French laws limiting non-European content on French television and radio stations.

The exercise of democratic citizenship domestically calls for citizens to understand the connections between local and global affairs and the complex systems of interdependencies that embed the US economy in the world economy. Without deep understanding, voters might unintentionally aggravate the economic and social circumstances that cause present challenges to economic competitiveness.

According to the Office of the United States Trade Representative, the North American Free Trade Agreement, for instance, created the largest free trade area in the world, which stimulated trade among 442.4 million people and resulted in a combined gross domestic product of \$17 trillion. From 1993 (the year preceding the start of NAFTA implementation) to 2006, trade among the NAFTA countries almost tripled, from \$304 billion to \$903 billion. Each day the NAFTA partners conduct nearly \$2.5 billion in trade. US exports to NAFTA partners nearly tripled between 1993 and 2008, from \$142 billion to \$418 billion.

Canada and Mexico are the two countries to which the United States exports more goods and services, jointly accounting for 23 percent of all US exports. In 2007 US exports to Canada represented \$296 billion, and US exports to Mexico represented \$136 billion, compared to \$65 billion in exports to China, the third largest importer of US goods and services.

Because of the large volume of trade and the larger border we share with them, the economic and political development of these partners is consequential to US economic security. Jobs are very important for political and social stability in Mexico, the home of one in five of the immigrants to the US during the last decade. Political, economic, and social stability in Mexico is critical to US national security, as American border towns and states are discovering.

Absent a strong and wide base of skills that include international competencies such as knowledge of world history and geography, understanding of global issues, foreign language skills and cultural flexibility, the prospects are bleak for American competitiveness, and for good and enlightened government and citizenship, at a time of growing integration with the global economy.

Two consequences of the premise that the demand for international competencies has extended beyond the area studies specialist and to become part of the basic competencies necessary for citizenship and work in American society are the need to incorporate these competencies in the graduate curriculum of other fields such as education, social work, law, public health, and business, and the need to develop some aspects of international competence in the undergraduate curriculum and in K-12 education.

WHAT CONSTITUTES GLOBAL COMPETENCY?

I define global competency as:

- A positive disposition towards cultural difference. An interest and understanding of different civilizational streams and the ability to see those differences as opportunities for constructive transactions among people.
- An ability to speak, understand, and think in languages in addition to the dominant language in the country in which one is born.
- Deep knowledge and understanding of world history, geography, of the global dimensions of topics such as health, climate, economics, and of the process of globalization itself.

Global competency comprises three distinct sets of abilities and skills. While developing competency in each of them may facilitate acquiring competencies in the others, these represent sufficiently distinct domains that they can be treated, for purposes of policy and programming, as independent.

The first set of competencies is “soft” skills and attitudes that reflect an openness, interest, and positive disposition towards the variation of human cultural expression. In their most basic forms these skills comprise tolerance of cultural differences. More advanced are the skills to recognize and negotiate differences in cross-cultural contexts, the cultural flexibility and adaptability necessary to develop empathy and trust, and to have effective interpersonal interactions in diverse cultural contexts. The value of these competencies is arguably easier to recognize by their absence. The negative consequences of intolerance, prejudice, and bigotry, or a sense of cultural or racial superiority in a diverse democracy or business are self-evident. These skills and cultural awarenesses can enhance the effectiveness of people in a range of occupations, from education, trade and services, law enforcement, and the arts, to innovation and development in business or science—not only as these skills facilitate international transactions, but as the growing diversity of the US population, as a result of immigration, makes cross-cultural awareness necessary for domestic transactions as well.

In spite of the advantages of a modicum of cultural awareness and cosmopolitanism, US citizens are more likely to believe that their culture is superior to that of others (Pew), an attitude that is unlikely to serve the nation’s ability to compete economically or to lead successfully in international organizations or global negotiations, and likely to undermine domestic intercultural relations.

These competencies can be developed in a number of ways: reading books that reflect cosmopolitan views and values, interacting with culturally diverse groups of students, engaging in school-to-school international projects, and accessing content about topics such as comparative literature, world history, or geography.

Cultural awareness can be developed at all levels of the educational ladder, ideally at the early ages, when children’s basic values are shaped. The opportunities to develop these competencies can effectively be integrated across existing subjects in the curriculum; they do not require separate slots in the timetable and may be easier to integrate in the existing curriculum frameworks.

The second set of global competencies results from disciplinary knowledge in comparative fields: history, anthropology, political science, economics and trade, and literature. These competencies address problems that have an international or global dimension. Recent surveys show young Americans lagging behind youth in other industrialized countries in their

knowledge of geography and world affairs (Roper). In a recent survey, only 58 percent of American youth knew that Afghanistan was the base of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and only 17 percent could find the country on a map. Only 42 percent could identify Japan on a map of the world and only 31 percent could locate Great Britain. Only 19 percent could name four of the world's nuclear powers (Harding).

These competencies can be developed at all levels of the educational ladder, although they should probably be emphasized starting in the middle school curriculum, and deepen in high school and at the college level. Examples would be deep knowledge of world history, geography, cultural history, comparative literature, international trade, and development economics. There are also global topics that require drawing on different disciplinary fields. One can argue that an educated person needs to be conversant with such topics and therefore needs the education to comprehend them. One example would be the population paradox (Nova). At its core, the population paradox is simply the expression of demographic forces: the increase in health conditions worldwide, reduced birth rates in developed nations, and higher birth rates in developing nations are changing the world's demographic balance. The result is an aging and declining population in developed countries and a growing population in developing countries. The population paradox has implications for global patterns of trade and consumption, energy and resource use, environmental impact, and international relations. Understanding the sources of these demographic trends and the options to deal with them requires some knowledge of cultural norms in different societies, disparities in resource distribution, development economics, and comparative politics.

Skills can be developed in the formal curriculum of instruction, but also in afterschool projects, peer-based projects, and summer programs. For example, Netaid (www.netaid.org) provides professional development and resources to high school students who want to lead projects to educate their peers about global poverty. In part, these competencies can also be developed in study abroad and exchange programs and through joint research projects where students from different countries collaborate using technology. The Global Classroom Project of the US United Nations Association is a very promising initiative to help students in inner-city schools learn about the multiple dimensions of different cross-national negotiations, and to gain perspective as they work on assignments where they view these negotiations from the point of view of different nations and groups.

The third set of global competencies is foreign language skills. These allow communication through varied forms of expression of language with individuals and groups who communicate principally in languages other than English.

The mix of these three types of competencies and the level at which they should be developed will vary in different professions, and also at the graduate, undergraduate, and K-12 levels.

THE SPECIAL ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

Preparing students with the skills and the ethical dispositions to invent a future that enhances human well-being globally is the most critical challenge for educational institutions in our time. Universities are particularly well placed to contribute to the three objectives of global education: developing global values, globalization expertise, and foreign language skills. They can do this by placing these objectives in the middle of their mission. But they can also do this for constituencies other than their traditional students, particularly the larger public and K-12 populations. It is well within the special responsibility of universities to educate the greater public in issues of critical importance where universities have a singular advantage. Universities can produce the body of knowledge about global affairs to which the general public needs access; they can also prepare instructional materials and deliver professional development programs for teachers and school administrators to develop global values, foreign language skills, and globalization expertise in the K-12 curriculum, much in the same way that they supported science education in high school in the 1950s and 1960s. Finally, universities can evaluate existing or proposed programs to support global competence, thus developing a knowledge base that helps discern what works well, with what effects, and at what costs. As higher education faculty and students collaborate with school districts and other institutions in preparing all students for globalization, they will not only enhance their own global competencies and develop the character of college students and perhaps faculty, but also demonstrate their commitment to serve the greater public in sharing resources and expertise at a time when the economic predicaments facing the nation heighten the importance of solidarity and public service.

THE ROLE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Taking on the responsibility to help develop global competency among K-12 teachers and among the larger public is different from internationalizing the university, although both objectives are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

The options to advance the internationalization of universities are multipronged, including internationalizing the curriculum, the faculty and the student body; developing partnerships with institutions abroad so that faculty and students can do research and study; and supporting faculty research and involvement about international issues. Few of these efforts can achieve similar levels of impact at low cost as using distance education to extend university teaching to a global constituency.

As universities develop programs to teach matters pertinent to globalization to a wider global constituency, including K-12 teachers, they will facilitate the creation of global learning communities that will support the development of global competency among participants. This option will also help internationalize the faculty and will provide opportunities, through appropriate linkages, to internationalize degree programs. In addition to developing and offering online courses and programs for this purpose, universities can use technology to share the knowledge about globalization they generate widely through multiple means, including webcasts and various modalities of open source.

For example, the Harvard Extension School has developed an approach to engage faculty to teach courses to distance learners with modest levels of additional effort. The use of technology is a key component of this approach: video-streaming lectures offered on campus make them accessible to distance participants online, and face-to-face discussion sections are replaced by online sections that bridge distance and time (for a detailed discussion of this approach see Laserna and Leitner).

I offered through the Harvard Extension School an online version of a course in comparative education policy that I teach to students at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The experience has convinced me of the practicality and scalability of this approach. The first time that course was made available to distance learners, over 50 students from multiple countries enrolled, creating a virtual global learning community of colleagues involved in the practice of education policy. Our discussions with this group were very stimulating to me and to the doctoral students who worked with me as teaching fellows in the course. The quality of questions

and discussions was akin to the level of conversations in advanced executive education seminars with experienced practitioners. As we plan successive versions of the course we are looking for ways to make connections between online students and those in our on-campus programs, who would benefit from interaction with more experienced colleagues actually involved in the practice of the work many of our students aspire to do.

There are no doubt important challenges to the necessary institutional and programmatic changes in universities if we wish them to contribute to developing the necessary global competency among citizens and in our schools. It will take leadership to overcome those challenges. To lead in helping our universities reclaim their mandate to enlighten citizens as they become globally competent in search of a global order of justice, equality and freedom for all is our opportunity. 🌐

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